**Tension in the air**

FOR MORE THAN 200 YEARS, the world’s nuclear powers have coexisted. America, China, Russia, Britain, France, and Israel have all kept their weapons within limits, each with its own arsenal, its own checks and balances. But now, the unthinkable is happening. Russia and China are looking at each other. They are ready to fight. And the rest of the world is watching in horror.

The United States is not alone in its fear. The entire world is watching the standoff between Russia and China. The two nuclear powers are now at loggerheads, each with its own strategy. The United States is watching from the sidelines, hoping that the two powers will find a way to resolve their differences peacefully.

But the situation is not as simple as it seems. The United States is not the only country that is watching the standoff. The entire world is watching, and everyone is waiting for the outcome. The world is waiting to see what will happen next.

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Reflection of a changing America
Part 1

The Illinois River brought city founder Thomas Beard to the area, then known as Indian Mount Village. In 1815, in the early 1800s, the waterway was a source of commerce and tourism.

Reflections of a changing America
Part 1

Denise Shandover sees the tangible results of another week’s work at Excel Corp. as Stoplight Liquors owner Lisa Miny cachy pays her paycheck.

...it’s hard to adjust

continued from page 1

Excel Corp., the second largest manufacturer in America, wanted to replace the Oscar Mayer plant, and most of the town’s residents were enthusiastic about the offer. They thought life would be the way it used to be, with an influx of money, new businesses and jobs for their children and grandchildren.

But during his travels as a representative for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Walters saw what happened when manufacturing, operating on an assembly-line basis, closed down, leaving plants in the mid-Midwest.

Yes, they killed local jobs. But they also returned streams of immigrants, most of them Mexican, to land that desirable dem of strong, young workers.

What Walters had seen on his trips across the Midwest was already starting to attract the attention of the labor movement. In the late 1980s, he was reading the transformation that occurred as manufacturing jobs were removed from mid-Midwestern American towns and cities.

People from different cultures who speak different languages were crowded into communities where white, English-speaking Americans had lived for generations.

The new arrivals brought new music, new foods and new holidays. They also brought new social problems.

With the new wave of European-Americans, there was a further wave of Hispanic-Americans. This brought a change in the cuisine, calling their “Little Mexico.”

Walters didn’t know these new immigrants as people, but he knew their presence was changing the way of life in America’s heartland.

He knew his own town, too. In 1988, the year he bought the Stoplight Liquors from former Oscar Mayer workers, the town was 40 percent white, 20 percent Hispanic, 30 percent African-American, 7 percent Asian and 3 percent other.

But it had changed. The Hispanic and African-American population had increased to 50 percent, with the whites declining to 30 percent. The Asian population had remained the same, at 3 percent.

The town was a microcosm of America’s changing demographics.

In the late 1980s, Walters decided to do something about it. He convinced the manufacturer to hire local workers and to train them to do the jobs.

He also started a program to help new immigrants learn English and to understand American culture.

Today, Stoplight Liquors is a thriving business, with a diverse workforce that is proud of its heritage.

But the challenges are far from over.

The town is still dealing with the effects of the closure of the factory.

Walters sees the Hispanic and African-American population continuing to increase, and he is determined to do everything he can to help.

He is working with local schools and community organizations to provide programs to help new immigrants learn English and to understand American culture.

And he is working with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to provide a variety of services to help Hispanic businesses.

Walters is determined to help his town become a model of diversity and inclusion.

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Being mayor of Beardedtown means waking a lot. Bob Walters, who has been elected three times, checks on the spriters at Mile 59 Park, where he and his wife, Nancy, have spent many hours volunteering. During his years as mayor Walters has seen the town’s major employer and retail balance change. When Hispanic immigrants came to Beardedtown, “It was culture shock for everyone,” he says.

One hundred trucks full of 205-pound hogs, like these from Miller Farms near Auburn, arrive at Excel each day.

in the process cut themselves with barbed wires, hurt their backs and suffered from erupting deep injuries. Walters said.

Excel’s most serious accident came in 1980, when workers leaked phosphoric gas that flowed from a cooler where phosphoric hogs were kept, according to Occupational Safety & Health Administration records. Seventeen workers breathed the toxic fumes; seven had to be hospitalized.

These workers cut down all the mating tables with Excel in 1994, the company backed a clear that “if they continued to have those men, we were probably looking at a closure.”

Employee turnover was also a problem, reportedly hitting 100 percent a year by mid-1996. The company’s slaughterhouse was strategically located near farms in Illinois, reportedly populated countryside that produced the hogs Excel slaughtered. But there weren’t enough workers living nearby, so when Excel increased production, the company had to import its labor.

Every week, Excel officials interviewed job candidates, but they weren’t able to get enough people in the job pool here,” said Walters. “It’s order to lead the factory and get the people they needed, they had to go outside the area.

One issue to note is that the workers from the south of the border who arrived adjacent to the large house about every other week.

After training to death, after sneaking across the border, people are prepared to do anything. “There is no one,” said a Hispanic man working in Beardedtown. “If I came into the United States under a pile of anonymous, what right do I have to complain?”

Excel confirmed a written statement that they “have done mobile recruiting in areas of high unemployment where people were looking for work opportunities. This included southern states as well as southern and western.

The company, which relaxed required re-requirements over the past seven months for face-to-face interviews with a representative, “At the same time we have added the positions of the Texas border towns of Laredo, Eagle Pass, Brownsville and El Paso, drawing job candidates with spaces on Spanish-language radio.”

Excel sent name Lisa Minch to the Texas-Mexico border at least 10 times during the eight years she worked at the plant. Sometimes, Minch administered drug tests and gave physiologically intense orders a day during the few to their jobs.

“Was it like 110 degrees out there?” said Minch, who left Excel last year. “It was really a 110 degree day that day.” The pay Excel paid its physical esteem got a $400 advance and a new way that ticket to Beardedtown.

N

One hundred trucks full of 205-pound hogs, like these from Miller Farms near Auburn, arrive at Excel each day.

later can remember when that first Mexican hogs moved to Beardedtown. Suddenly, they were just there.

The Rev. Eugene Wattland recalls looking at his congregation at St. Alexius Catholic Church in 1951 and seeing a handful of Mexicans in the pews. Soon, they were knocking at his door, asking for a Spanish-speaking priest.

Buffy Tillie Port, a longtime real estate agent in Beardedtown, said many Mexican families settled in the Upper Beardedtown Ladies’ Improvement Club, can still recall the first time a Mexican family stopped by to ask if the might have a place for rent.

“It is strange the few to discrimination.

Some of the people in Beardedtown probably did not realize that a fire,” said Tillie Port, who rented them a three-bedroom house she owned.

Principal Pan Dobbs remembers a Mexican mother and father walking into the school with their three children. The family had heard they could apply to a school to attend the school.

The family didn’t understand anything the school officials told them, but the Mexican family didn’t understand the school, small-town rules that now disfrute their house.

Police officers showed up at Mexican homes because unethical neighbors complained the mariachi music was too loud.

City officials arrived to enforce Missouri's

After reopening the former Oscar Mayer plant in 1987, the Excel Corp. has increased pork processing production from 3,000 hogs to nearly 15,000 each day. The plant employs 2,000 area residents, approximately 90 percent are Caucasian and 40 percent are Hispanic.

continued on page 8
"They said we came to take their jobs" continued from page 4.

that their kids had grown taller than their Spanish-speaking neighbors. Hispanics were commonly depicted as a threat to non-Hispanic Americans. This tension came to a head in 1921 when the United States entered World War I and the government began rounding up suspected aliens.

The police department was prepared for the arrest of Spanish-speaking residents. However, the effect of their arrest was felt far greater. During the war, many police officers were called away to the front lines, leaving the city with fewer police officers than usual.

As a result, the police department was under increased pressure to keep order.

In the fall of 1921, the local police department was brought in to help with the enforcement of the anti-immigrant laws. The police officers were given power to arrest and deport anyone they suspected of being an alien.

The police officers were also tasked with the responsibility of keeping an eye on the Spanish-speaking population. This led to increased surveillance and the arrest of many people.

In the end, the police department was able to enforce the anti-immigrant laws and keep the Spanish-speaking population in check.

In the years that followed, the attitude towards Hispanics began to change. However, the legacy of the anti-immigrant laws continues to this day. It is a reminder of the importance of protecting the rights of all people, regardless of their race or ethnicity.